

1996

The Effectiveness of Peer Mediation in Westville C.U.S.D. #2

Dennis A. Watson

Eastern Illinois University

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The Effectiveness of Peer Mediation

in Westville C.U.S.D. #2

(TITLE)

BY

Dennis A. Watson

Field Experience

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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Abstract

During the past several years concerns about student behavior and school discipline have figured prominently in various public opinion polls. Many approaches and methodologies have been used in an unsuccessful effort to remedy the problem. These methodologies include "zero tolerance", codes of conduct, contracts and assertive discipline. Peer mediation is a relatively new concept that has not been significantly researched in rural areas.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of peer mediation programs at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School in Westville, Illinois. A survey of twenty-six certified teachers at both of the schools was conducted. Those surveyed were asked to respond to questions concerning their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the peer mediation program at their school; identify other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures; to evaluate the inservice procedure; and determine if there was a difference in the number of discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions after the implementation of peer mediation.

Results of the study indicated that the majority of the teachers felt that they were inserviced properly in peer mediation, and that peer mediation was effective as an

intervention procedure. Although there was a considerable variance in the number of detentions, suspensions, and expulsions after the implementation of the peer mediation program, the teachers' perceptions were divided on the amount of time spent on discipline.

The author recommended that a peer mediation steering committee be established in the two schools to develop formal written objectives and results of peer mediation. These committees' results should be distributed to students, teachers, administrators, school board and the citizen advisory board.

Chapter 1

Overview

Introduction and Background

A recent Gallup poll found lack of discipline, shared with a concern about fighting, violence and gangs, as the biggest problem confronting public schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1994). Many school district staff have or believe they should have some form of preventive discipline effort underway. There are various commercial procedures purported to be useful in preventive discipline which ultimately advocate reducing school violence and promoting safe schools. However, neglecting to carefully examine these programs could be costly in time and resources. Districts, and even schools within districts, may differ in the salient characteristics contributing to discipline problems. Larson (1996) found that "an individual administrator, the quality of a school's teaching staff or the attendance area of a particular building can have a significant impact on intervention procedures" (p. 6).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of teachers on the effectiveness of peer mediation as a preventive discipline intervention program at McMillan Grade School (Grades 5-6) and Westville Junior High School (Grades 7-8), which are located in Westville CUSD #2, Westville, Illinois.

Primary goals of the study were to assess the following according to data which was provided by a survey instrument as to the teachers perception:

1. To identify the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation.
2. To identify other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures.
3. To determine if there was a difference in the number of discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions after the implementation of peer mediation.
4. To determine if the respondents were properly inserviced in the philosophy of peer mediation.

Strategies to curtail violence in Illinois schools were presented to the Illinois State Board of Education on December 13, 1996. The recommendations were based on the work of over one hundred participants in a violence summit as well as discussions among educators, law enforcement personnel and social service representatives.

The Illinois State Board of Education recognized that long-term prevention and intervention strategies were essential to address the complex root of violence, yet intermediate efforts must also begin to stop the spread of violence and restore safety and order to Illinois schools. The report emphasized that efforts to address the violence issue

must be collaborative, focusing on actions at the local level and building on what has been learned from past achievements and failures (Illinois State Board of Education, 1996).

Limitations of the Study

The data for this study were obtained from 26 teachers at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High in Westville CUSD #2. In order to prevent a capacious study, data were not gathered from students, parents or community members. Therefore, the perception of the effectiveness of peer mediation in the Westville schools is based solely upon a confined group.

A factor that could not be controlled in this study was the trend of increasing violence and discipline problems in schools. It is safe to assume that the number of suspensions and expulsions may have increased in Westville due to factors that were uncontrollable in this study. Assaults and violence to teachers have increased dramatically in the past several years, which will definitely affect suspension and expulsion rates.

Westville's unique demographics (see Appendix A) include low test scores, high percentage of low income students and single parent homes, high drop-out rates and poor attendance. Westville exhibits the characteristics of urban schools in a suburban area. Therefore, prudence must be

exercised in comparing the findings of this setting to other schools of similar size and geographical areas.

Operational Definitions:

1. Peer Mediation: A mode of student conflict management.
2. Conflict Resolution: The process of using skills in the areas of perspective taking, social problem solving, impulse control and anger management.
3. School Climate: The atmosphere of the school as it relates to learning.
4. Detentions: Students detained before or after school for disciplinary measures.
5. Social Skills: Skills that are taught or learned that identify and predict feeling of others, which result in effective problem solving skills and effective communication.
6. Suspension: Any disciplinary action whereby a student is separated from school for a period not to exceed ten school days. In-school suspensions, in which students are suspended from class and are usually placed in isolation with supervision, were not applicable in the study.
7. Expulsion: The removal of a student from school for a period of time ranging from more than ten days to the balance of a school term for gross disobedience or misconduct.

8. Intervention Programs: Programs designed to increase social skills knowledge, social skills improvement and social behavior.

9. Violence Prevention Curriculum: A curriculum that teaches children to change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. It is designed to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and to increase their level of social competence.

10. Survey: Written instrument of questions which were answered by the teachers in the study and later evaluated in order to form judgments or conclusions about the study.

11. Punitive measures: The act of inflicting punishment for a disciplinary action.

12. "In Loco Parentis" ("In place of parent"): The phrase used in education to describe the relationship of certified school officials to students.

Chapter 2

Rationale, Related Literature and Research

Rationale

During the past several years concerns about student behavior and school discipline have figured prominently in various public opinion polls. Many approaches and methodologies have been used in an unsuccessful effort to remedy the problem. These methodologies include "zero tolerance", codes of conduct, contracts and assertive discipline.

The number of violent incidents in schools is increasing. Between 1990 and 1994 thirty-three percent of cities had a significant increase in school violence (a student killed or seriously injured), and in 1993-1994 school violence increased fifty-five percent in large cities and forty-one percent in cities of 100,000 or more. Ten percent of teachers and nearly one-fourth of students in public schools say that they have been the victim of a violent act in school (Hamburger, 1993).

According to a survey by *Metropolitan Life*, "97% of teachers nationwide feel that measures must be taken to emphasize school discipline and safety" (IASB Newsletter, 1995, p. 7).

According to the National School Board Association, about three million crimes occur on or near school each year, and half of all violent crimes against teens occur on or near schools.

More than 80% of over 2,000 school districts responding to the 1993 National School Boards Association (NSBA) survey believe school violence is currently worse than it was five years ago. In 1984 the U.S. Surgeon General legitimized violence as a public health issue, and in the 1990's the nation's governors and Congress declared in the National Education Goals that safe schools are essential to the broader agenda of school reform(National School Board Association, 1993).

The immense focus on discipline, violence and safe schools nationwide, plus the inordinate number of discipline referrals in the Westville schools, created a need for intervention and prevention. Fortunately, Westville CUSD #2 has not had a violent crime or an assault on a teacher; however, teachers have been verbally assaulted.

Experts agree on the importance of establishing and enforcing clear, consistent standards of discipline. Stover (1988) found that "a general erosion of discipline usually precedes actual violence. There is a substantial and clear pattern of behavior that goes on in a classroom for teachers that are about to get hit. For example, if a teacher has been sworn at or victimized by theft and robbery, that teacher is more likely to be assaulted" (p. 9).

The concern for better discipline, safe schools and violence prevention is a major concern for Westville CUSD #2.

Westville High School had the highest suspension and expulsion rate in Vermilion County during the 1994-1995 school year (see Appendix B).

Review of the Literature

Braun (1994) indicated that "teachers and other certified employees have a statutory duty to maintain discipline in school, on school grounds, at extra-curricular events, and with respect to all school programs. Each school board must establish a policy on student discipline" (p. 174).

Teachers have "In Loco Parentis" authority in the absence of students' parents or guardians. Braun (1994) indicates "the authority is not as broad as that of a parent. The doctrine of 'in loco parentis' protects certain school district employees from liability for employment related acts of ordinary negligence. Willful and wanton misconduct may, however, create a liability for the school district" (p.174).

While the responsibility and duty of maintaining discipline is easily documented, discipline effectiveness techniques are widely debated. Punitive discipline is ordinarily the norm in maintaining discipline. Frequent techniques are detentions, suspensions and, ultimately, expulsion. Usually these techniques are applied in a progressive manner.

Recently there have been legislative changes that support "zero tolerance" for serious offenses. Public Act 89-371 (effective January 1, 1996) amended Section 10-22.6 of the Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6) to expand the authority of school boards in expelling students and extending the maximum expulsion period from the end of the current school year to the end of the next school year. The extension of authority enables districts to address gross disobedience and/or misconduct which occurs towards the end of the school year and for which a suspension is deemed by the school board as inadequate discipline. In addition, the amendment added language to reflect the requirements for federal funding under the Gun Free Schools Act that school districts have a policy of a twelve-month expulsion for certain weapon violations (Coffee, 1996).

Both the extension of expulsion through two school years and the Gun Free Schools Act requirements contain provisions that the imposition of expulsions is to be determined by school boards on a case-by-case basis. It should be added that expulsion is not required under Illinois School Code (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6) nor the Gun Free Schools Act. Both the decision to expel and the length of the expulsion is left up to the discretion of the school board.

Litigation supports the conviction that school districts and school boards have the right and responsibility to provide a safe and positive school environment. This author supports the supposition that expulsion should be the school's last option and should be reserved for the most serious offenses and dangerous situations.

Despite the forms of punitive measures, schools still face serious incidents of violence. Suspensions and expulsions are as controversial as they are widely used. While suspensions are one of the top choices for dealing with discipline and violence, there is a large body of research that shows these approaches to be of very short term, limited value. Kadel and Follman (1993) found that "suspended students could benefit from staying in school since they are much more likely to be in need of direct instruction, to subsequently drop out of school, to be at further risk of delinquency by being left unsupervised, and to be disproportionately from minority groups" (p. 12).

"Many school districts, particularly those in urban districts, report using crisis intervention measures, yet preventionists point out that metal detectors and armed police are not school safety magic wands" (Furlong, Morrison, & Clontz, 1993, p. 27). While recognizing the need to use these measures, other researchers note that educators may "inadvertently instill more fear and mistrust in students by

implementing policies that are excessively oppressive or demeaning or that risk violating students' rights" (Kadel and Follman, 1993, p. 23).

Research Review

Research confirms the fact that violence is a growing problem in American society. Many factors contribute to the increase in violent acts. The roots of student violence are found in the community and the home, but society has yet to address the issue of student crime. As a consequence, schools are a convenient source for remediation attempts. Most schools have responded by dealing with the symptoms, instead of the causes, of violence.

As schools move away from crisis management, many are integrating violence prevention into their curricula and staff development. Sixty percent of the districts that responded to a NSBA survey reported that by 1993 they had initiated some kind of violence prevention program (National School Board Association, 1993). Violence prevention curricula vary considerably across schools and districts; however, most curricula incorporate peer mediation as an avenue to teach social skills and communication techniques to solve problems. Since student violence is often an expression of unresolved conflict, skills such as active listening, speaking in "I" terms and negotiating a mutually beneficial plan are introduced and

reinforced through modeling, rewards and expectations and are promoted as tools for peacefully resolving conflict (Sadalla, Holmberg, & Halligan, 1990).

Peer mediation programs provide many benefits for students. Talking out disputes is a new approach for many students and is enjoyable for most as each participant attempts to understand different points of view. As stated by Rogers (1994) "many students being able to sit down and talk about disputes without the threat of violence is a new and rewarding experience" (p. 9).

There has been limited quantitative research done on the effectiveness of peer mediation programs. Indicators show that programs do indeed provide many obvious benefits for students.

From evaluation studies, interviews and anecdotes, results are consistent in terms of impact on students and on school climate. "Students trained as mediators show enhancement in self-esteem, self-image, increased knowledge and ability in problem solving and conflict resolution. Schools also report decreases in violence and improvement in general school climate" (Committee for Children, 1995, p. 2).

In a survey of schools implementing mediation conducted by the New Mexico Department of Education, sixty-six principals evaluated the effectiveness of the program according

to a range of observable behavioral criteria. The principals rated the program highly effective (Committee for Children, 1995).

Until recently very little research validating the effectiveness of conflict resolution training programs in schools existed. Over the past five years seven studies in six different schools in both suburban and urban settings and in two different countries have been conducted by Johnson and Johnson (1994). Students in first through ninth grades were involved in the studies. Johnson and Johnson found that before training most students had daily conflicts, used destructive strategies that tended to escalate the conflict, referred the majority of their conflicts to the teacher and did not know how to negotiate. After training students could apply the negotiation and mediation procedures to actual conflict situations, as well as transfer them to non classroom and non school settings, such as the playground, the lunch room and home. Further, they maintained their knowledge and skills throughout the school year (Johnson and Johnson, 1994).

After their training students generally managed their conflicts without involving adults. The frequency of student-student conflicts dropped eighty percent, and the number of conflicts referred to the principal was reduced by ninety-five percent. Such a dramatic reduction of referrals of conflicts to

adults changed the school discipline program from arbitration conflicts to maintaining and supporting the peer mediation process (Johnson & Johnson, 1994).

Uniqueness of the Study

The goal of this study was to investigate the perceptions of the teachers in Westville schools on the effectiveness of the peer mediation program. McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School, which have adopted the Second Step Violence Prevention Curriculum, began peer mediation in the fall of the 1994-1995 school year. Plans for peer mediation at Westville High School are tentatively planned for the fall of the 1996-1997 school year. Successful peer mediation at the high school is contingent upon the positive perception of the effectiveness of the students and the staff at the elementary building.

The literature supports the feasibility of pursuing a study on the value of peer mediation. Conflict resolution training without peer mediation has not been deemed as successful as training that incorporates problem solving techniques. Students without peer mediation training usually adopt the "win/lose" strategy.

During the time of this study, Westville CUSD #2 was the only school district in Vermilion County to incorporate a conflict resolution program with peer mediation.

The timing of the study was pertinent to the recent amendment in the Illinois School Code. The Illinois State Board of Education (1995) amended on July 14, 1995, for the 1995-1996 school year by changing Section 27-23.4 as follows:

"Violence prevention and conflict resolution education. School districts shall provide instruction in violence prevention and conflict resolution education for grades four through twelve and may include such instruction in the courses of study regularly taught therein" (p. 307).

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Overview

The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the peer mediation program in Westville schools. The researcher surveyed the teachers in McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School in the Westville School District.

Research Questions

The survey questions were designed to determine the perceptions of the teachers in McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High pertaining to the effectiveness of peer mediation.

Following are the research questions that were the focus of the study. (The numbers in parentheses indicate the item from the teacher feedback survey list on Appendix C which provide the data to the research question).

1. What were the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation? (Items 4,5,10,11,13,15)
2. What are other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures? (Items 3, 6, 7, 14)
3. Was there a variance in the number of detentions, suspensions and the amount of time spent on discipline after

the implementation of peer mediation? (Items 8, 9, 12. Also, end of the year records)

4. Were the teachers properly inserviced regarding the philosophy of peer mediation? (Items 1, 2)

Sample and Population

Westville CUSD #2, located in East Central Illinois, is comprised of 1,300 students. These students are housed in four buildings: Judith Giacomma Grade School (K-4), McMillan Grade School (5-6), Westville Junior High School (7-8), and Westville High School (9-12).

This sample reflects the perceptions of the teachers in McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School. The population consisted of a total of twenty-six teachers in both buildings combined.

McMillan has an enrollment of 200 fifth and sixth graders. The junior high school has an enrollment of 182 seventh and eighth graders. With the exception of age and grade level, the demographics in each building are similar. The Westville School District, which has an Equalized Assessment Valuation (EAV) of approximately twenty-four million dollars, is experiencing a decline in enrollment due to the demise of the industrial-based economy. Each building has an average of forty-eight percent low income students. All students are from

the Westville School District boundaries and are bused to their respective schools.

Data Collection

The questionnaire (See Appendix C) was designed by the researcher relative to the specific objectives of the study.

The questionnaire was administered in teachers' meetings by the building principals during the month of February, 1996.

One hundred percent of the questionnaires were returned. All responses were kept confidential. Provisions were made for the results of the survey to be conveyed to the teachers.

Use of the survey instrument allowed the teachers of each building to respond to questions which assessed the teachers' perceptions of whether any change had occurred in the area of student discipline, and if that change was actually attributed to the implementation of the peer mediation program. To obtain data relative to the impact on discipline occurrences, data were also collected from the elementary building principals after the implementation of the peer mediation program pertaining to the number of discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions since the implementation of peer mediation. These data were collected from the end-of-the-year discipline reports.

Data Analysis

A review of the data collected by the survey instrument provided information which was used to evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the peer mediation program in the schools.

After receiving the completed survey instruments, the results were analyzed by the researcher according to each research question. The returned surveys were tabulated by hand in terms of the teachers' responses for each item.

Descriptive statistics in the form of frequency and percentages were used to analyze the data and answer each research question. Data were reviewed and the results were tabulated using numbers and percentages and presented in tables.

Chapter 4

Results

Overview

The results are presented for each of the following research questions:

1. What were the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation?
2. What are other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures?
3. Was there a difference in the number of discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions after the implementation of peer mediation?
4. Were the teachers properly inserviced regarding the philosophy of peer mediation?

Results for research question 1.

1. What were the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation?

Survey items 4, 5, 10, 11, 13, and 15 provide the data to answer this question. The data for these items are presented in tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Table 1 demonstrates that 69.2% of the teachers surveyed indicated that their students do view conflict as a way of life.

Table 1

Students in this school view conflict as a part of life.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(12)</u>	<u>(3)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
	23.1%	46.1%	11.5%	15.4%	3.8%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 2 shows that there is a mixture of perceptions pertaining to independent problem solving. Approximately 57% of the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that students solved problems themselves.

Table 2

Students in this school tend to solve problems themselves.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(10)</u>	<u>(5)</u>
	0%	19.2%	23.1%	38.5%	19.2%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Although there was not conclusive evidence that students have improved their social skills, Table 3 shows that 34.6% of the respondents felt that the students had improved their

social skills. Table 3 also indicates that 34.6% of the respondents did not feel that the students had improved their social skills as a result of the peer mediation program.

Table 3

Students in this school have improved their social skills.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(9)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
	0%	34.6%	30.8%	30.8%	3.8%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 4 indicates that 46.1% of the teachers surveyed disagreed that students in their school are violent.

Table 4

Students in this school are violent.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(9)</u>	<u>(3)</u>
	3.8%	19.2%	30.8%	34.6%	11.5%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 5 shows that an overwhelming percentage of respondents, 77%, perceived the school as safe, while 15.4% of

the teachers surveyed were not sure of their safety in the schools. Only 7.6% indicated that their schools were not safe for teachers.

Table 5

You as a teacher feel safe at school..

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(10)</u>	<u>(10)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
	38.5%	38.5%	15.4%	3.8%	3.8%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 6 indicates that an overwhelming number of respondents, 80.8%, felt that peer mediation is an effective way for students to resolve conflict. Only one respondent felt that peer mediation was not an effective way to resolve conflict. Written comments indicated that peer mediation is a formal conflict resolution process which provides a positive method to deal with conflict and that it gives students a way of expressing their views in a nonviolent mode. This is a new experience for many students who have never before seen conflicts resolved in a peaceable manner.

Table 6

Overall, you as a teacher feel that peer mediation is an effective way for students to resolve conflict.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(10)</u>	<u>(11)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(1)</u>
	38.5%	42.3%	15.9%	0%	3.8%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

As revealed in Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6, the responses indicated that the teachers at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High felt their students were not violent. The teachers indicated that the students have improved their social skills and that peer mediation was effective. Thus, the logical answer to research question 1 was that the teachers strongly felt peer mediation was an effective intervention procedure.

Results for research question 2.

2. What are other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures?

Survey items 3, 6, 7, and 14 provide the data to answer this question. The data for these items are presented in tables 7, 8, 9, and 10.

Table 7 shows that 76.9% of the teachers felt that their school had a climate that was conducive to learning.

Table 7

The climate in this school is conducive to learning.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(14)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(0)</u>
	53.8%	23.1%	19.2%	3.8%	0%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

An inordinate number of respondents, 96.1%, perceived the school's physical appearance as clean.

Table 8

The physical appearance of this school is clean.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(12)</u>	<u>(13)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(0)</u>
	46.1%	50%	3.8%	0%	0%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

An overwhelming majority of the respondents, 80.8%, perceived that their principal was visible. Some respondents included written responses stating that, in their opinion, principal visibility is extremely important in the school climate. Table 9 also indicated that 11.5% teachers did not feel that their principal was visible enough.

Table 9

The principal is visible.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(13)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(2)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(2)</u>
	50%	30.8%	7.7%	3.8%	7.7%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

An overwhelming number of respondents, 80.7%, indicated that the majority of discipline problems occur during unstructured time such as lunch, hallways, and before and after school. Table 10 also indicates that 15.3% of the respondents said that the majority of discipline problems did not correlate to nonstructured activities.

Table 10

Most discipline problems originate in nonclassroom activities (i.e. lunch, hallways, before and after school).

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(9)</u>	<u>(12)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(3)</u>
	34.6%	46.1%	3.8%	3.8%	11.5%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

The answer to research question 2 is that the majority of respondents indicated that there are variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures. School climate, physical appearance, and principal visibility are instrumental in preventing discipline occurrences as perceived by the teachers.

Results for research question 3.

3. Was there a variance in the number of detentions, suspensions and the amount of time spent on discipline after the implementation of peer mediation?

Survey items 8, 9, and 12 provide the data to answer this question. Also, end of the year records were provided by the principals. The data for these items are presented in tables 11, 12, and 13.

Table 11 shows inconclusive evidence regarding the amount of time spent on student discipline after the implementation of the peer mediation program. Approximately 34% of respondents agreed that they spent less time on discipline, while 38.5% said that they did not spend less time on discipline after the implementation of the peer mediation program. Table 11 also indicated that 26.9% of respondents were not sure of the amount of time they spent on discipline after the implementation of peer mediation. This discrepancy was noted on written responses by the teachers indicating that since this was their first year with the peer mediation program, they did not have enough information to form an accurate judgment.

Table 11

You as a teacher spend less time on discipline after implementation of peer mediation.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(3)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(7)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(4)</u>
	11.5%	23.1%	26.9%	23.1%	15.3%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 12 indicates that 30.8% of the respondents were not sure if they had given fewer detentions since the implementation of the peer mediation program. Again, some of this indecisiveness is due to inexperience with the program and the lack of data to compare with previous years. However, 34.6% of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have given fewer detentions after implementation

Table 12

You as a teacher have given fewer detentions since the implementation of peer mediation.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(1)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(7)</u>	<u>(2)</u>
	3.8%	30.8%	30.8%	26.9%	7.7%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 13 illustrates that a majority of the respondents, 69.2%, were not sure if there have been fewer suspensions since the implementation of peer mediation. Only 7.7% of the respondents believed that there were fewer suspensions since the implementation of peer mediation, while 7.7% of the respondents strongly disagreed that suspensions had declined since the implementation of peer mediation.

Table 13

There have been fewer suspensions since the implementation of peer mediation.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(2)</u>	<u>(18)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(2)</u>
	0%	7.7%	69.2%	15.4%	7.7%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

In summary, although there was a substantial reduction in the number of discipline occurrences, suspensions, and detentions as indicated by the principals' end of the year reports, there was a discrepency in the respondents' perceptions as indicated by Tables 11, 12, and 13.

Results for research question 4.

4. Were the teachers properly inserviced regarding the philosophy of peer mediation?

Survey items 1 and 2 provide the data to answer this question. The data for these items are presented in tables 14 and 15.

Table 14 indicates that the majority of the teachers were aware of the philosophy of peer mediation. Approximately

15% reported that they were not sure of the philosophy of peer mediation.

Table 14

Teachers are aware of the philosophy of peer mediation.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(14)</u>	<u>(8)</u>	<u>(4)</u>	<u>(0)</u>	<u>(0)</u>
	53.8%	30.8%	15.4%	0%	0%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

Table 15 indicates that 50.8% of the teachers surveyed felt that they were adequately inserviced in peer mediation techniques. Of the respondents surveyed, 26.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had been adequately inserviced. The teachers who were not sure represented 23.9%.

Table 15

Teachers have been adequately inserviced in peer mediation.

	<u>SA</u>	<u>A</u>	<u>NS</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>SD*</u>
<u>Teachers (N)/(%)</u>	<u>(7)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(6)</u>	<u>(5)</u>	<u>(2)</u>
	26.9%	23.9%	23.9%	19.2%	7.7%

*SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, NS=Not Sure, D=Disagree, SD=Strongly Disagree

In summary, the answer to research question 4 is that the teachers were satisfied with the orientation of the peer mediation program. The majority of the teachers were aware of the philosophy of peer mediation and the staff development process.

Chapter 5

Summary, Findings, and Recommendations

Summary

This study focused on the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation as a preventive discipline intervention program at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School. This was accomplished by administering a survey to all twenty-six of the certified staff at the schools listed above. Analysis of the survey results provided information about the perceptions of the teachers pertaining to the following research questions:

1. What were the perceptions of teachers regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation?
2. What are other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures?
3. Was there a variance in the number of detentions, suspensions and the amount of time spent on discipline after the implementation of peer mediation?
4. Were the teachers properly inserviced regarding the philosophy of peer mediation?

A review of literature relating to discipline intervention strategies and policies pertinent to this study was conducted by this researcher. The research revealed several studies in large metropolitan areas; however, there was no research at the

Westville area. Several sources of information were utilized to obtain research data pertaining to the topic of peer mediation. An ERIC search was utilized to find the most recent materials for the literature review. Other sources of information were obtained from the Illinois State Board of Education, the most recent Illinois State School Code, the Regional Superintendent of Schools, interviews with attorneys and staff interviews with Westville's social workers and guidance counselors. During the 1995-1996 school year there was only one school in the county which had initiated a peer mediation program. There was no local research on peer mediation.

In February, 1996, a survey was administered to the teachers at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School. The survey was designed to answer questions relative to the goals of the study. All of the teachers responded to the survey. The author also secured information from the "End of the Year Report", a mandated report from the Illinois State Board of Education. The "End of the Year Report" identified the number of suspensions, expulsions and other discipline referrals germane to the author's study. The information was processed by the researcher and reported in the form of tables and dialogue in Chapter IV of this study.

Findings

The major goal of the study was to determine the teachers' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the peer mediation programs that were initiated at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School. The findings indicated that the majority, 80.7%, of teachers indicated that they felt peer mediation was an effective intervention procedure.

Another goal of the study was to determine if there are other variables that prevent students from receiving corrective discipline measures. Results from the study indicated that there was an overwhelming support of previous literature which indicates a correlation between school climate, principal visibility and school physical appearance relative to the number of discipline occurrences. The majority, 80.7%, of the teachers felt that their principal was highly visible. Almost all teachers surveyed, 96.6%, indicated that the physical appearance of their building was clean, and 76.9% of the teachers perceived their school as having a climate which was conducive to learning. This finding also correlates with research indicating a correlation between positive school climate and discipline referrals.

The third goal was to determine if the teachers perceived a variance in the time spent on discipline, number of detentions and suspensions after the implementation of the

peer mediation program. Teachers were equally divided on their perceptions of the amount of time spent on discipline before and after the implementation of peer mediation. The teachers' perceptions of the number of detentions given before and after the implementation of the peer mediation program was again equally divided with 30.8% indicating that they had given fewer detentions and 34.6% indicating that they had given more detentions since the implementation of peer mediation. The majority of the teachers, 69.2%, were not sure if there were fewer suspensions after the implementation of the peer mediation program.

There was a distinguishable difference in the teachers' perceptions pertaining to the number of detentions and suspensions after the implementation of a peer mediation program. The "End of the Year" report data showed that the number of suspensions dropped from 245 out-of-school suspensions to 116 after the implementation of the peer mediation program.

A review of McMillan Grade School's and Westville Junior High School's disciplinary reports also revealed similar findings. After the initiation of the peer mediation program, the detentions dropped from 689 to 426. There was one expulsion hearing for a student at Westville Junior High School and one for a student at McMillan Grade School, both for possession of a

look-alike weapon. It should be noted that the number of discipline board hearings dropped from 36 in the 1994-1995 school year to 17 in the 1995-1996 school year. This data suggest a strong correlation in the effectiveness of a peer mediation plan.

The final goal was to evaluate the staff development process regarding peer mediation. The teachers indicated that they were satisfied with the inservice procedures.

Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine the teachers' perceptions on the effectiveness of the peer mediation program at McMillan Grade School and Westville Junior High School. The results strongly indicate that the majority of teachers perceived peer mediation to be effective; however, the teachers did not perceive an impact on detentions and suspensions after the implementation of an effective peer mediation program.

The study also showed a strong correlation between principal visibility, school climate and school physical appearance as they relate to effective discipline intervention. It should be noted that the principals at both schools involved in the study were first year principals with no experience.

It is recommended that a peer mediation steering committee be established in the two schools to develop formal written objectives and results of peer mediation. These

committees' results should be distributed to students, teachers, administrators, school board and the citizen advisory board. The data developed by this committee would be beneficial to the perception of the effectiveness of the peer mediation program. Positive feedback regarding the effectiveness of peer mediation would enhance public relations and morale with the teachers.

In a successful peer mediation program, it should be noted that "unofficial peer mediation", incidents without designated student mediators occur often, and the results are not documented. Peaceable conflict resolution techniques are often used away from school with parents, friends and acquaintances. Informal discussion with students at the steering committee meetings would disclose useful information to assist students in the future years.

As previously noted in the review of literature, the primary concern of teachers and parents nationwide is the lack of discipline in schools. It has been well documented that punitive discipline techniques are ineffective. It is recommended that school districts structure their discipline efforts in a positive manner in a conflict resolution program that has some form of peer mediation. Students must be exposed to a form of conflict resolution that involves dialogue without the threat of violence or hostility.

It is also recommended that administrators note the strong correlation between the physical appearance of the school, principal visibility and school climate. Administrators have the opportunity to set the "tone" in a school. Their expectations should be high relating to respect for school property and the rights of other students and teachers. Administrators should lead by example. Fairness, respect and courtesy are contagious.

The author strongly encourages the adoption of a peer mediation program at Westville High School for the 1996-1997 school year. The effective results and experiences of the elementary student mediators offer a unique model for the Westville High School students and staff.

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Appendix A
Demographics

Appendix A

PART 1

LEGISLATIVE DIST. 53 ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
 54-092-0020-2 WESTVILLE C U SCHOOL DIST 2 1994-95 SCHOOL YEAR REPORT CARD DISTRICT SUMMARY

SCHOOL AND STUDENT INFORMATION

SCHOOL NAME	DROP OUT RATE	% LOW INCOME	% LEP ENROL	ATT RATE	MOBIL RATE	# OF CHRONIC TRUANTS	% TRUANT RATE	% WHITE ENROL	% BLACK ENROL	% HISP ENROL	% ASIAN ENROL	% NAT AM ENROL	TOTAL ENROL	PARENTAL INVOLVMT
WESTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL	9.7	23.1	0.0	88.5	20.1	10	2.8	98.7	1.3	0.0	0.0	0.0	399	57.9
WESTVILLE JR HIGH SCHOOL	0.0	39.2	0.0	92.0	24.0	10	5.4	98.4	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	186	99.1
JUDITH GIACOMA ELEM SCHOOL	0.0	38.9	0.0	95.1	22.6	0	0.0	98.2	0.2	0.2	1.3	0.2	542	99.8
MC MILLAN ELEM SCHOOL	0.0	48.2	0.0	94.6	16.1	0	0.0	99.5	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	191	100.0
DISTRICT	9.7	34.7	0.0	92.7	21.1	20	1.6	98.6	0.8	0.1	0.5	0.1	1,318	88.0
STATE	8.8	34.0	5.6	93.4	19.3	43,668	2.4	84.7	20.6	11.6	3.0	0.1	1,880,376	93.6

Appendix B

Suspensions and Expulsions

Peer Mediation

*** Indicates Westville CUSD #2**

Appendix C

Survey

Appendix C

MCMILLAN/ WESTVILLE JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

TEACHER FEEDBACK SURVEY

PURPOSE: The curriculum director and the board of education are presently conducting a study of peer mediation. Teacher input and feedback are vitally important to this study. Your responses to this survey will be greatly appreciated. You will be informed of the results.

DIRECTIONS: Please respond honestly and frankly to each statement. Do not put your name on the survey. All responses are anonymous. The survey is not coded in any way to identify your individual responses. If you believe that you do not have sufficient information to respond to a statement, please leave it blank. Use the following rating scale:

1 = Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Not Sure 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly Disagree

-
- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| 1. | Teachers are aware of the philosophy of peer mediation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | Teachers have been adequately inserviced in peer mediation. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | The climate in this school is conducive to learning. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 4. | Students in this school view conflict as a part of life. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 5. | Students in this school tend to solve problems themselves. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

6. The physical appearance of this school is clean. 1 2 3 4 5
7. The principal in this building is visible. 1 2 3 4 5
8. You as a teacher spend less time on discipline since the implementation of peer mediation. 1 2 3 4 5
9. You as a teacher have given fewer detentions since the implementation of peer mediation. 1 2 3 4 5
10. Students in this school have improved their social skills. 1 2 3 4 5
11. Students in this school are violent. 1 2 3 4 5
12. There have been fewer suspensions since the implementation of peer mediation. 1 2 3 4 5
13. You as a teacher feel safe at school. 1 2 3 4 5
14. Most discipline problems originate in nonclassroom activities (i.e. lunch, hallways, before and after school). 1 2 3 4 5
15. Overall, you as a teacher feel that peer mediation is an effective way for students to resolve conflict. 1 2 3 4 5